

AM1222, Madam President. (Dierks amendment may be found on page 1367 of the Legislative Journal.)

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Chair recognizes Senator Dierks.

SENATOR DIERKS: Thank you, Madam President, members of the body. If you remember, LB 718 classifies domestic cervity and ratite birds as livestock and makes regulatory changes to reflect that classification. AM1222 is being offered by the Ag Committee as a compromise amendment to LB 718. To a significant degree this amendment scales back some of the changes made in LB 718 by the committee amendments which were adopted on General File. The original LB 718 transferred permit authority for domesticated elk and deer from the Game and Parks Commission to the Department of Agriculture. The permit provision was opposed by the Department of Agriculture and by some of the producers. Consequently the committee amendments completely remove the permit requirement for production of these animals. This amendment does not restore the permit system but it does create a registration requirement within the Department of Agriculture. This will allow both the Ag Department and the Game and Parks Commission to monitor the location of these operations in the event that an animal health problem or some other issue arises. This registration system appears to have the support of all parties involved in the issue. The committee amendments had also deleted the authority of the Game and Parks Commission to prohibit the possession or importation of any elk or deer species. Presently the commission imposes such a ban on white-tail deer and red deer because of their potential to impact Nebraska's native wild animals. This has been a point of contention for some producers as they feel that production of these animals should be allowed. The amendment addresses this issue by restoring the authority of the commission to prohibit production of these animals, but it also inserts language authorizing it to take intermediate regulatory steps. For example, under this amendment the commission could allow the production of red deer in most areas of the state but prohibit only in areas where free roaming elk are found. It could allow the production of white-tail deer in areas where only white-tail are found in the wild but prohibit them in areas where wild mule deer are found. These intermediate steps can be used to allow for agricultural production of these animals, but only in areas where they pose no threat to wildlife. It is my intent that these intermediate steps will be utilized whenever possible and that a statewide prohibition of a species would only be used by